

Ingolstadt / Le Mans, 13 Juni 2003

Quotes from the Audi press conference

Seiji Ara (Audi Sport Japan Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "Already last year, Le Mans was a sprint race over 24 hours. That's why I badly wanted to be here again. I've been preparing myself very well for this race by training together with skiers and other sportsman to strengthen all muscles."

Jan Magnussen (Audi Sport Japan Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "Even though the starting position is not that important at Le Mans I would have preferred to be a little nearer to the front. Unfortunately, didn't get a single clear lap, but that was the same for all the drivers. I'm looking forward to doing the start – but even more I would like to be in front on the finish line."

Marco Werner (Audi Sport Japan Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "It's a enormous jump from a touring car with which I competed in the Nürburgring 24 Hour race two weeks ago back to the sportscar. The Nürburgring Nordschleife is even more challenging, but the speed and the fascination here at Le Mans are unique. I think this weekend we will experience the longest sprint race we've ever seen."

Kazumichi Goh (Teamowner Audi Sport Japan Team Goh): "I'm especially glad to have Jan (Magnussen) and Marco (Werner) in my team as new drivers. Last year at Le Mans, during the night, I always saw fast times of the other Audi on the screen – and then Marco got out of the cockpit. After that I really wanted to work together with him. The story about Jan is a little funny: A Japanese magazine wrote about alleged negotiations between Jan and me. I didn't know about that and gave him a call. Now he's driving my car and set the fastest time in our team during the qualifying session."

Frank Biela (Audi Sport UK Audi R8 #10): "It's great to be back at Le Mans – I feel a little bit like coming home. After three successive wins, for me the pressure is not that high anymore. Nevertheless, we are here to win. The team worked hard, now we need a race without any problems and of course also a little luck. My R8 was good from the very first lap on, exactly like I'm used to driving for Audi."

Perry McCarthy (Audi Sport UK Audi R8 #10): "The R8 is a great car, simply fantastic. After the race in 1999, I'm glad to be a part of the Audi team again. The week here at Le Mans is passing by very fast, but our team has already become a real family. During the qualifying sessions, I didn't do many laps, that's why I'm really keen for the race to start."

Mika Salo (Audi Sport UK Audi R8 #10): "From a driver's point of view it does not make such a big difference switching from a Formula One car to the Audi R8. But the whole atmosphere here at Le Mans is unique: it's not so hectic, but much more pleasant and calmer than at Formula One weekend. To drive the first time at Le Mans in the night was very exciting. And I was able to do so in the best car – so what do I want more?"

Mike Earle (Team Director Audi Sport UK): "The Audi R8 that we raced in 2001 was already fantastic. But I have the feeling, since then every smallest detail has been refined. The car is better in every respect. On top of that I have three strong and experienced professionals in the cockpit who also cope very well outside the cockpit. Everyone knows exactly what we want to achieve this weekend."

Stefan Johansson (Team ADT Champion Racing Audi R8 #6): "There are three races which every race driver wants to win: Le Mans, Indianapolis and Monaco. Le Mans is very challenging, probably the most challenging track in the world. Le Mans is a real test, extremely hard. I still feel young and fit, so I still want to race here for more years."

JJ Lehto (Team ADT Champion Racing Audi R8 #6): "I've driven already many good race cars, the Audi R8 definitely is one of the best. Champion are a very professional team, and as the car is so easy to drive I felt immediately very positive."

Emanuele Pirro (Team ADT Champion Racing Audi R8 #6): "Bentley is the favorite, but we also have a good chance. We know how reliable the Audi R8 is. If the Bentleys make the slightest mistake, we are there. It is our aim to make the best out of our possibilities. I am very optimistic, we are well prepared. When we do a good job in the race and have some luck, even a victory is possible."

Dave Maraj (Team Director Team ADT Champion Racing): "We have to look at the first hours to see how strong the Bentleys are in the race. Maybe they are able to drive as long as us with one set of tyres and with the same amount of fuel – obviously we hope not... The other two Audi teams are also very strong. Despite that, we try to beat them all."

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Sport): "The three Audi customer teams are well prepared for this weekend. Each of these teams could be on the top of the podium. You should not draw your conclusions for the race results only from the qualifying times. I am convinced that the gap between the Bentleys and the Audis will be not so big in the race. Fuel consumption and tyre wear are decisive factors. All calculations have shown that it will be very tight. I think the spectators will see one of the most exciting Le Mans races of the last ten years. All cars starting from the first four rows have good chances, including the Dome-Judd, that gave us a hard time during qualifying."

Photos and further information can be found on the Internet:
www.audi-sportpress.com (accreditation required)